



UNITED STATES
CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION
4330 EAST WEST HIGHWAY
BETHESDA, MD 20814

CHAIRMAN INEZ M. TENENBAUM

May 19, 2011

The Honorable Al Franken
United States Senate
320 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Franken:

Thank you for your letter of March 17, 2011, on behalf of one of your constituents whose daughter suffered burns from placing her palms on the glass panes of a gas fireplace at a hotel where the family was staying.

Like you, I am troubled by any potentially preventable injury associated with a consumer product, particularly in a case like this where a young child is seriously injured. Accordingly, I have asked U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) staff to review possible actions within the Commission's statutory authority to reduce the incidence of injuries resulting from unintentional contact with gas fireplaces.

The first area of review concerns the current effectiveness of voluntary standards for gas fireplaces. In your letter, you specifically request that the Commission "reconsider deferring to voluntary standards in the case of glass-enclosed gas fireplaces." On April 12, 2011, the Commission received a Petition requesting that the CPSC initiate a rulemaking for mandatory standards for gas fireplaces. The Commission's Office of General Counsel currently is reviewing this Petition and will soon determine whether it meets the criteria for docketing. If docketed, the full Commission would then determine whether to initiate a rulemaking.

One other area that I have directed staff to review is our public outreach and education efforts in this area. During my tenure as Chairman, I have focused not just on improving safety standards but also making sure that consumers are educated about hidden hazards in and around homes and public settings.

With regard to gas fireplace-related injuries, one possible example of additional outreach could be working with hotels and other places of public accommodation to ensure that they have barriers and appropriate warnings around products that create quantities of heat sufficient to cause burns. To that end, I have asked the Commission's Office of Information and Public Affairs to look at possible messaging opportunities, through social media and other means, to

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further educate stakeholders, parents and caregivers about the potential danger of gas fireplaces in places where small children are likely to have access.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Should you or your staff have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Christopher Day, Director of Congressional Relations, at 301-504-7660, or by e-mail at cday@cpsc.gov

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Inez Tenenbaum".

Inez M. Tenenbaum